

# **LIFE IN BIBLE TIMES**

## **Lesson 5**

### **Time**

**Dr. Wynand de Wet  
(aka Pastor Wayne)**

## No Clocks!

Time in Jesus' day was nothing like our modern obsession with hours, minutes, and seconds. No phones, watches, or wall clocks! Most people were poor, living day to day, focused on surviving the present. "Today" was broad, stretching into yesterday's lessons and tomorrow's hopes. Consider the 12-hour workday in the parable of the vineyard (**Matthew 20:1-16**). Unlike our rigid calendar days, their "today" blended past experiences with future expectations. Actions today were shaped by yesterday's wisdom, and tomorrow's events felt almost present.

Time was fluid, not a ticking clock.

---

---

---

## A Calendar Tied to Nature

Nature was the calendar in Jesus' time. Sunrise (**Matthew 28:1**), sunset (**Matthew 14:15**), or budding plants (**Matthew 24:32**) marked time. Internal cues like hunger or sleepiness also guided daily rhythms. Exact times were rare—what mattered was that something happened, not precisely when.

Different groups had unique systems: Romans started their day at midnight, Jews at sunset. For example, is the "sixth hour" in **John 4:6** noon or 6 p.m.? Time was flexible, rooted in life's natural flow.

---

---

---

---

## A Calendar of People, Events and Feasts

Significant people or events anchored time. **Luke 1:5** begins, "In the time of Herod king of Judea..." The event outweighed the exact date, unlike our habit of starting with "last Tuesday" or "this summer." Vague references abound: "One day as Jesus..." (**Luke 5:1, 17**), "One Sabbath Jesus..." (**Luke 6:1**), or "As evening approached..." (**Matthew 27:57**).

Holy days shaped life in Jesus' time, directing daily activities. The Gospel of John uses these feasts as markers for Jesus' story (**John 2:13, 23; 5:1; 7:2; 10:22; 12:1; 13:1**).

Yet Jesus redefined the purpose of holy days, declaring, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath" (**Mark 2:27-28**).

Given this fluid view of time, it's clear why the Bible avoids precise dates for events like Christ's return. Attempts to pinpoint such times from Scripture are misguided and futile.

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Time Tied to the Most Important Person

In a culture driven by honor and shame, important people held sway, especially at public events. Time itself seemed tied to the "most important person" of an occasion. Lesser individuals couldn't rush or delay them—not even the father of a household. The right to act belonged to the key figure, and when they moved, it was always "on time." They could never be late.

Rethink now examples like in **James 4:13-17** that amplifies how only God can determine the actual time of when, what will happen. Paul would tell people that he's coming without giving any specifics as in **Romans 15:24**, and listen to how vague Jesus is about the arrival of the Holy Spirit in **Acts 1:4-5**.

And then of course the second coming—no specific time is given! Why? Because this is obviously attached to the Father's right to choose when He wants this to happen...as the Most Important One! Read for example **Matthew 24:43-44; 25:13** and **James 5:8**. This should also help us to understand that Jesus is absolutely not referring to His knowledge (or lack thereof), when He says, "No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father." (**Matthew 24:36**). This has nothing to do with Jesus' omniscience. It is rather about helping us to understand GOD should be honored as the One Who has the right to decide when it is time, and when the Father acts it will be the perfect time...on time...just the right moment! Take into consideration how Jesus illustrates with the word "hour" in the Gospel of John how He and the Father is on exactly the same timeline—He is in the "know", but honoring His Father, so we can *see* how to honor the Father—read **John 2:4; 7:6; 13:1 and 17:1**.

This allows us to gain clarity on many other texts like **Revelation 6:10-11, 2 Peter 3:8-9, Revelation 22:20, Mark 13:33-37**. The parable in **Matthew 25:1-13** of the 5 wise and 5 foolish virgins waiting on the bridegroom fits perfectly into this discussion on time—not only does the most important person determine when “on time” is, but also when “late” is! Everyone arriving *after* the *most important Person* (*Jesus*) is by implication...*late*!

This implies that God can also stretch a day to last as long as He wants it to last: **Hebrews 3:7 (Psalm 95:7), Hebrews 3:13, 2 Corinthians 6:1-2**.

It furthermore implies that God can reach *into* time and guarantee actions in what we perceive as “future”—**Revelation 21:6-8**!

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Today - Yesterday - Tomorrow

Most of us struggle to live in today, often fixated on tomorrow. We work hard now for next month’s vacation, take vitamins for long-term health, or diet to shine at a summer wedding. **Matthew 6:34** offers a different view: “Do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.”

In Jesus’ time, a world of scarce resources forced people to focus on today, striving to survive without dwelling on an uncontrollable tomorrow. This reliance on the present deepened their trust in God’s provision and control (**Matthew 6:25-34; 6:11; James 4:13-17**). Surprisingly, their next concern wasn’t tomorrow but yesterday. Why? The past offered encouragement when today felt overwhelming. Reflecting on God’s faithfulness—His provision for the Jews through impossible circumstances—gave hope and clarity for today. Yesterday shaped how to navigate today well.

This mindset transformed how they valued “old” things. Unlike our indifference to an “old” book or movie, they saw the past as a guide to light up today (**1 John 2:7; Matthew 5:21, 33; Acts 15:21; Revelation 12:9; 20:2**). Consider **2 Timothy 3:16** and the “Old” Testament’s enduring value to the “New.” This perspective enriches our reading of **Revelation 1:4, 8; 4:8 alongside 11:17; 16:5**.

[illegible]